Tavistock. Nov. 10.
Thursday 1932

Yes, my kind clever colly — come to lunch on Tuesday next here at 1. I'm told not to lunch or dine in hot restaurants — anyhow, here is much nicer. & you can stay on a bit later & talk. Then I'll tell you all about Violet. It was her novel that brought her — I think she's been rather silly about it — but will tell you, if you'll keep it secret.

Publishers mental gossip. Yes, I see now, in a flash, a chapter in your past I never saw. Frightfully queer. She wasn't what I expected — but no time to say

more now.

I've seen Elly again & had all kinds of tappings & listenings, & she says there's nothing wrong with my heart, but this usual old intermittent pulse that I've had since I was a baby has gone a step too far — hence my faintings in the heat, at the [illegible]: & that I must lie down & rest & not get excited & not walk too far & not talk too much & not go out to parties: but I can write all the morning: & talk all the evening: & read all night. So I'm very happy. And my draught of digitalis is rapidly slowing up my pulse: — it's already better.

So there — is that the kind of detail you like? Oh how nice to see you again! You're the only person I ever ask to come here — of person you can be called. V.

NYPL

HAMILL + BARKER 2/5/62

Monks House Rodmell
7th Jan 1933

Well, dearest Creature, this is a lovely spring
evening. The thrushes are singing — no,
not singing but chattering in the tree — you know
the squawk they make. Leonard is pruning
the fig tree; it is just upon five o'clock &
so soft & fine & pink that we can hardly
settle in. Yet I swear this is only Jan: the 7th:
& L. picked me a snow-drop this morning.
This prelude is intended to make you jealous,
as you observe. For next to Ethel Smyth, you're
jealous of the English fields, at this moment — so
I diagnose your case. O Lord that I could
see you, as you are — sitting on a tight
plush seat in a car, I imagine, with views of
the Middle West — an unattractive land,
largely sprinkled with old tin kettles —
gazing across vast slabs of plate glass. For
you are now travelling across America; &
the negroes are spitting in the carriage next door: &
after 25 more hours, the train will stop at
a town like Peacehaven, only 75 times
larger, called Balmoralville, where you
will get out, & after a brief snack off

sucking iced pear drops with the Mayor, who is called, I should think Cyrus K. Hincks — but that's a detail I leave to you. You will go to a large Baptist Hall, & deliver a lecture on Rimbaud. Oddly enough I'm doing the very same thing, only in another part of America — see enclosed — that's why I'm so startlingly accurate.

I was seized with gloom when you left — to ask Ethel. But it's odd what tricks affection — to leave it at that — plays? I don't see you for six weeks sometimes; yet the moment I know you're not there to be seen, all the fishmonger shops in the world go dark. I always think of you as a pink shop with a porpoise in a tank. Now there are no porpoises. No, Sissinghurst is Grey; Sevenoaks a drab coloured place. Here I sit at Rodmell, with a whole patch of my internal globe extinct. Yes — that's a compliment for you. I didn't expect to see you on Christmas day. We stumbled through the mud with the Keynes's. What other news is there? Heaven be praised, I have seen no one. I read; I walk; I put dinner in the oven; I sleep. And next week we go back — dear me — to London; where Mrs Belsher has influenza & her fur coat, valued at £30 — was stolen

~~was stolen~~ off the leg outside the W.C. door she says
by an unemployed consumptive man a friend
of Mrs Scott Johnsons. As you will deduce,
Mrs Belcher & Mrs S.J. are not on the best of
terms. And Hugh Walpole is coming to dinner. And
Violet Trefusis sent me a vast nodding bunch of
lilac, to which I replied — as you would have me.
No, I'm not spending the New Year between her &
Mme de Polignac. I wave the banner of chastity
& cry Upward. Then there's Ethel (Sands)
then there's Nan Hudson. Then there's Raymond,
then there's Rosamond Lehmann, Roger Fry &
myself all sitting on the studio floor & eating
ham & chicken. Ah, says Nan. this is the sort of
life I really love. Then, my good woman, why
dont you lead it! I say, being in a truculent
mood just now. Snipping the twigs off these
Elderly heads, as I daresay you've observed.
This was at Angelica's party — this brilliant wit,
these flashing epigrams. By the way, are
you lecturing on me at Albertvilleapolis Pa?
If so, do send me your notes. Please do. And
let them say something of love, & Horne the
butler. Let them slip in one word to say Vita
loves Virginia better than the whole world
wrapped in a nutshell. Better than all those

ardent but anaemic herring-gutted with whom — Lord love her soul! — she consorts. Because Virginia is so clever, so good; & Virginia — this is a fact, not merely an idle boast — Virginia has been asked to write for the London Mercury by Jack Squire. What he says is, Will I send him a story & he'll see if it'll do. Oh my God — how I envy you, slipping off your skin & adventuring through jungles where the flamingoes rise in flocks & the old black women stand at the doors, a baby at each breast! That's what I adore & honour & cherish the Nicolsons for — sloughing their skins every spring in a heap of drab scales & plunging naked into nothingness. Yes: you are a venturous woman, & make me envious. Please, for God's sake, don't catch the flu, or the pneumonia — both I see rampant in New York. Dont do a thing that can diminish your splendour in my eyes. Come back soon, before I start, as I intend, for the East. I'm told that Bunny Garnett's book on Pocahontas is very good. Is it? Please tell me. I can read nothing but my own novel, which is just as well, because nobody else will ever get through it.

Shall you now clear a space among the spittoons & write to me? Describe everything, down to the lace on womens nightgowns. Then add a terse but compendious statement why I love Virginia next best to my husband & sons. And take great care of yourself.

V.

Us today — & we dined with the Laskis — I didnt like her, or Mr Saxon of Harpers, or the Dinner or the Drinks — & I'm so cold, & the pipes are still frozen.

52 Tavistock Square

Jan 24th 1933

Yes, dearest Creature, I did write to you but I called you Nicolson, & didnt say forward; so you may not have got it. And it was the very most passionate letter I ever wrote, & the loveliest & wittiest what a pity. (This is pretending you never got it.)

You wrote to me from the high seas. How like you — to have waves 80 miles high, & to stand on the Bridge with the Captain. Now the point of you is that everything is like you — thats very profound. Here it is freezing, freezing. You know we had June last month — well, all the roses will be burnt by frost. Leonard is always talking about his buds. And the pipes are frozen here, & when I've had my bath Nelly & I have to bale it down the W.C. filling a pail

with a tumbler. Heaven be praised, the w.c. is not yet frozen; but tomorrow the pipes will burst. I tell you all this to bring you in touch with England. I daresay you're eating clams on a sky scraper at this moment — 5.30 on Tuesday evening, the time you should be with me. And we wasted our last evening, I raging against Eddy, you very honourably upholding him. Did you ever discuss it with him? I've not seen him since; nor ever shall, I daresay, for I cant manoeuvre my friends tempers.

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They're all dying, my friends — only Mrs Hunter, I mean, & George Moore — Alan Parsons — none of them my friends, but the air is full of funerals, & old Ethel is in the highest glee. She was here, pounding the arm of the chair the other night, & I said Wont you be late for Mrs. Hunter? Dont care if I am said Ethel. At last I hacked her off,

& Mrs Hunter died 10 minutes after she got there.
I'm rather pleased; she was such a time dying, &
yet, if one has to die — as they say — I like her
drinking champagne in yellow satin ^way^ as well as
any ~~way~~. I am writing all the morning;
& I like writing; but you wont much care for it.
Never mind. Oh & tonight they're dancing
Orlando on the ice, & I shant be there.
Its a remarkable fact — the whole British
Peerage says they descend from the Countess I
invented, & still have the snow boots of which
they wore in that frost which I invented too.
Its all true, every word of it. They
charge 30/- a ticket, & I would willingly
have gone & hired skates if you'd have come.
But now my porpoise no longer crowns the
fishmongers ^shop^ — thats a quotation from
the Scholar-Gypsy. Dotty (excuse this
leaping & jumping — I have to dine out) has
given up the Poets series — I'm afraid she's
grumpy. but oh dear. I cant smooth out
all her grumps & glooms. She should be
mated with a stallion & pour her humours
down that sink. And the Press badly

wants a filip of some sort. Shall you have
your new novel ready for October? — its
about America; & it has a storm at sea.
We've had an American—head of Macmillans—
here today. Thats my boast. Oh I must
boast, for I cant bear to think of all
you're doing & seeing, & I not there, & I not
there! Please, please, write down every scrap
for me; you know how not a tassel on a
table or stain on a mat comes amiss.
And how I miss you! You wouldnt believe it.
I want coloured windows, red towers,
NYPL
moats, swans, & one old Bull walking
up & down an empty stable: you, in short.
But you dont want me. You
are enchanting, chiefly with the glamour
of your title & the glow of your pearls,
all the Coons in Canada — Tell me
that too: about the white soft women —
their blazing eyes. I wish I couldnt see
them so clearly couched on glittering sporty
grass with the daughter of the Sackvilles.
Now I must dress. We are dining in
Addison Road with the Laskis: who is
Mrs Laski? What shall I say to her? And the
pipes are frozen. Hail & Farewell — that was the
one book of G-M's I admired wholly. Write to me —
write — V.

Scott Johnson [illegible] going: poor depressed woman, not much of a manager though a heart of gold.

Love to Sibyl Colefax when you meet her at White House

52 Tavistock Sqre.

Feb. 14th 1933

(Valentines day but no valentine)

Yes—Jeb, it was very nice indeed to get your letter "I am just about to dine with the President"—those were the last words of the last chapter. I see you've learnt how to end chapters—rather as if I wrote And now darling Vita, the Prince of Wales being outside in his new streamline car, I'm off to dine with King George—Except that nobody, not even a blue snob like myself, could whip up much ~~Exce~~ excitement over that: but do continue your story. What new dress? What did the President say?—& what did you drink?

Now two things have to be said at once before Ethel, who's been lunching at the German Embassy comes in—but I'm afraid I was so huffy on the telephone that she won't. First: I've given, in a generous moment, the MS of A Room of O.O. to the Women's Service Club. They want me to sell it for them in America—its to stave off their bankruptcy. If you do in truth speak well of Virginia in Pineapplopolis, do you think any of the collectors there would buy it? Or what collectors are there? This is a mere question—if it comes your way, ask: but dont conceivably bother. ~~my only~~ I've gone & lost the name of the man who wanted to

to buy Orlando But they say no one buys anything new in the U.S.A.

2nd. We have our new car. But it's pathetic, the trust of human nature, to think that you'll be interested in that — with Niagara churning at your door & the wolves howling & the Indians chasing each other with tomahawks up & down snow mountains? Call on Brett if you're in Mexico & give her a kiss from me. She's stone deaf, & carries a trumpet wreathed in ribbons but was kissable once on a time. Here the Lawrence lice still propagate. Murry on Carswell on Lawrence — a disgusting pullulation — finally Frieda is going to speak in public. Honestly. No I dont think I can ever look at Lawrence again — they've cheapened him so. Think if I died, & left as my only friends, Logan & that little pimp Connolly: ~~& It~~ But you wont agree. And I am interrupted.

I was going to say our car has come — silver & green, fluid fly wheel, Tickford hood — Lanchester 18 — well what more could you want? It glides with the smoothness of eel, with the speed of a swift, & the — isn't this a good blurb? the power of a tiger when that tiger has just been fed after going in & out up & down Piccadilly, Bond Street. The worst of it is we cant live up to it. I've had to buy a new coat. But whats the good? Throw my hat. Thats all wrong — thats a singer saloon hat. —

Lord, I wish you'd come back. Tell me this is your

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last long voyage — you may take them out once with me when la mer est brusque — which reminds me, I'm learning Italian — Yes, as soon as I can stop writing to you — & I like dribbling on, for then I see a Porpoise in a shop window at Christmas & pearls & a pink coat — a Jersey was it? — anyhow you wore gaiters, & it was the sight of the gaiters — dont tell this to your audience — that inspired Orlando — the gaiters & what lies beyond — well: when I can stop I shall learn Andare to go. Its damned irregular. And my teacher is called Bianca, & she teaches me for love, & she's the mother of Mrs Stoop — did you know Big Bertha? She went off in an apoplexy & now Bianca has inherited the pearls. And I dined with Mary & she told me all about Charlie James the man milliner who was dropped by Heaven into her hands just as she ~~so~~ was sighing one day to Todd — Oh what I want is a young man to devote his life to dressing me. This Charlie does in Ryder Street — Her new dress is like that cold dish at Fortnums all white with black dice, or like Christabel's hall, or like anything that's symmetrical, diabolical & geometrically perfect. So geometrical is Charlie James that if a stitch is crooked, Vita, the whole dress is torn to shreds: which Mary bears without wincing though she has to dine with Diana, which seeing Charlie comes to Albert Road with a white cat (in rubber) is a gift. That is my smartest piece of gossip. It wont interest you, but then I should get it all wrong if I told you about the ~~pt~~ primulas & the pen-joncums, & how the peach has put out 3 inches of bud since we ~~I~~ were last in Sussex — last week end that is. Its a very fine cold bright Spring day here,

& my being is troubled with all those vague desires which — oh I think — yes I know — yes it is — Stheil. Oh my God

On the contrary Arran Leonard's new suit I think

So farewell.

No, there's no news. Have you seen Tom Eliot? Are you worn to a bone? How's Harold? Which of you is the favourite? Do send me some cuttings describing you. What sort of looking place is Virginia? And the Blacks? Lady Cunard's house very burnt — by Nancy some say. Raymond is much as usual — Clive has gone to Jamaica. Dont ask if he's alone, or if not, with whom. Roger's gone to Tangier: Vanessa to Charleston — London is so silent one sometimes hears a man blow his nose in Kensington High Street — which reminds me, this house may be pulled down next year; & we may flit this very march, to Gordon Square: so it may be you'll never see me again sitting surrounded by my pictures. I'll tell you. The D of Bedford has refused us once more, just as I had been with a measuring tape round 15 rooms, 3 w c s, & 2 bathrooms — God damn the Duke — David Cecil came here with Rachel — very happy, that's enough; how one thing leads to another. Vado, vai va, andiamo, andate vanno. Is that right.?

So love & farewell.

V.

I think Italian is frightfully difficult — to speak.
Bianca is not your Bianca: but Weiss.

Monks House.
March 18th 1933

Well, do you remember me? I wrote you a very long & passionate letter the other day, but stuck it in my case, forgot it, left it, & found it so out of date — it was all about earthquakes & banks failing — that I cant send it. How difficult this is to write, with all the spring birds singing & the garden full of blue & white crocuses — but ive been walking on the downs at Falmer. The woods there are like Greek horses' manes [Greek horses' manes] — d'you know the look? brushed, red, brisk — oh so lovely at this moment. I ~~can~~ only wish I were a poet. so that I could describe a team of

brown horses ploughing red brown earth; — a grove of trees reflected in a great pond there is there under the church, with two swans ~~swm~~ swimming: You must write it for me.

To turn to Americans — your horror, the publisher, is coming a las. There's no sense in it, since I've no plans to share with Houghton Mifflin: still of course he must, he must come. Anyhow I owe you that at least — I'll ask Sibyl to meet him — after your all too noble efforts about my MS. I never meant you to trouble to write — only to suggest a name. Anyhow it is obviously hopeless at the moment. Oddly enough an American Adams wants to buy the MS. of Flush — that foolish witless joke with which I solaced myself when I was all agasp having done the Waves. (You remember that very bad book?)

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I saw Sibyl the other day: & she had seen Harold, & Harold had said you are a roaring raging success; which, I said, dont matter a straw with Vita – She'll shake her coat, & the grease & the oil will run down her. A great compliment to you. Shall you net anything after all – with the Dollar collapsed? – There'll be the Experience, as they call it – all those virgins you've ravished – teas you've eaten, shrines you've visited, fat old women you've intoxicated. I liked the maid's letter – but what a very cultured woman to have had darning one's stockings! You know Sibyl is naturally, congenitally, an American. She can hardly tolerate the lowness of London houses, the age of the earth, any longer. But I doubt that worldliness pays – I never saw anyone so suspicious. I cut one of my silly jokes, & she takes umbrage, like a dog – I mean, you know how happy

Dogs look if you laugh at them. So do women
of the world. Oh but I'm going that
way myself. Who is my latest friend? A
Princess of the Blood royal — poor
stuck Patricia, as large, impassive
unjointed as a doll made all of China.
D'you know I had to talk to her for an
hour; & asked her all sorts of questions
about being Royal, & why she hadn't
married the ~~pres~~ King of Spain. She
balanced herself like a vast idol, slowly
sweeping her eyes round the room — this was
at a party given by the Queen's secretary
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in Duncan's studio. And I was
asked to meet the Princess but I think, in
my effort to keep up with your triumphs,
I told you that before. No, I said. I wont.

Please Vita darling come back soon.
We shall be off in the car to Italy
~~at~~ if you dont — we want to try the
fluid fly wheel on the Alps. Please come
stuffing up my stairs room. Just the same,
in your red jersey. Please wear your
pearls. Please bring Sarah. And then
ask me to ~~sy~~ kissing? Lord, how you'll
love your first night there & sunrise
seen from the pink Tower! Write
come.
V.

HAMILL & BARKER 2/5/62